

Fighting Back

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Summary: Raito's being unusually quiet. L is stereotypically bored, and trying to figure out why Raito, who used to be a great deal of fun to antagonize, is suddenly acting very atypical of himself. LxRaito fluffy oneshot

Chapter 1: Fighting Back

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It's two oh seven in the morning, and you look kind of out of it.

I relish these times—and I think maybe you know it, because the later it gets, the more suspicious your expression becomes when you glance at me or at the clock out of the corner of your eye. I like seeing you like this, all disheveled and irritated and almost not functioning.

I always feel like touching your hair, which gets faintly fuzzy and dull the longer we work. Your fingers, elegant, pale, start moving slower, and then will speed up when you get a burst of energy from somewhere inside yourself. I wonder where you keep your willpower—if you have a wellspring of it or if it just courses through your body, and you just have to tap into it, rather than draw from it.

I don't suppose it really matters.

But what I really like in these early morning times are your eyes. Even though the rest of you has dulled—hair limp, body slow, teeth clenched—your eyes don't change. Sharp, restless, suspicious, and most of all, alive with the only intelligence that has ever matched mine.

I wonder how you keep your eyes so sharp, Raito Yagami.

Mine aren't. I know they aren't. I don't sleep enough, I've got dark circles, and most of all, I do it on purpose. It's safer (and more amusing) when people underestimate me.

You don't. Even though I keep my eyes dull and uninterested most of the time. Even though I slouch and generally look half-crazed and messy and just pathetic. You see through me. I return the favor.

It's a twisted relationship—hell, it isn't one at all—but I'm content with it. It's sort of ... fun. Isn't it?

I don't ask you. You wouldn't answer honestly. You aren't an honest person, and you seem to delight in lying whenever you think it suits the persona you wear.

This is the reason I still suspect you of being Kira, you know. Because you do lie, because you enjoy fooling people, because you know that you're better than everyone else, and most of all, because you do wear this persona constantly.

A few times, I've seen you without it. In the car, with your father and Misa, thinking that you were going to die. When you fought me, physically. That was only a week ago, and it was so much damned fun that I could have asked Kira to kill Matsuda for interrupting us.

Do you think it's fun? I doubt it, somehow. You take everything so seriously. You don't seem to like the fact that a teenager, especially one as smart as you, needs time for both work and play. Another reason I think you are/were Kira. You suppress the human parts of yourself in favor of an ideal that can never really be reached.

I, as usual, am on the other end of the spectrum. I hide the better parts of myself, opting to save my best ideas and theories for discussion in my own mind. I prefer my own company to almost anyone else's.

Well, except yours.

I like you, Raito Yagami. I don't suppose you believed me when I called us friends. I meant it, though I don't know why I felt the urge to say it out loud. It probably did more harm than good, if you even remember it.

You probably don't.

I look over to you again. You haven't talked to me much since our last fight. I suppose I embarrassed you, pinning you in front of the cameras, where Matsuda and god knows who else was watching. Misa certainly was, and she put up a terrible fuss and it was awkward and I sort of felt like having her confined again. Just for the hell of it.

Not a terribly logical idea, that. But she is awfully annoying. Why did you pick her?

I open my mouth to ask you this, but I pause as I watch you notice my movement and slowly rotate your head so you're facing me. The rest of your body stays where it is—fingers poised above the keyboard. You look like you're already bored with whatever I'm going to say, although that could just be because you're so exhausted.

Recognizing this, I also recognize that it's time for bed, at least for you. So instead of inquiring after Amane-san (I'll ask tomorrow, when it's more likely that I'll get a good, fiery answer out of you), I begin to pack up my laptop and its cord.

You watch me with a dead expression, your cloudy eyes sluggishly following every move I make. In this one way, you remind me of myself—you recognize a worthy opponent when you see one, and you know it would be foolish not to study them. Even when you are only a few heartbeats away from sleep, you know this. And you act on it.

"Time for bed, Raito-kun," I say, almost cringing as I speak. I hadn't meant for my words to sound so authoritative—like a parent, speaking to a tenacious little toddler.

You don't seem to mind, though. Actually, when I examine the past few days, you haven't risen to any of the barbs or even my near-constant accusations.

You just kind of . . . look at me. And it's uncomfortable and I feel almost guilty, and then you just look away and keep working.

I wonder if maybe you're depressed. You haven't been as passionate lately, about anything. Your work is slowing down too. Maybe the erratic sleep schedule is getting to you.

You blink a few times and watch me as I stand, tucking the laptop under my arm as I move. "Come on, Raito-kun," I repeat, feeling faintly ridiculous as I move a bit closer to you, one hand outstretched, ready to shake you if you need it.

But suddenly you seem to come back to life, and you sort of shake your head and unclench your teeth. "Okay," you say distantly. You stand slowly, hesitantly, as though you are afraid that you're going to fall over.

"Is Raito-kun okay?" I ask, as we start to move towards the elevator.

You flash me one of your smiles—it's a half-fake one. I can tell that you mean it to be reassuring, not cruel or sarcastic, but you're not really happy either. The smile doesn't connect with your eyes. "I'm only tired," you say.

We step into the elevator.

"Raito-kun seems unusually tired these past few days," I comment, pressing the button for our floor.

Your eyes skim the floor of the elevator before you lift your head lethargically to meet my eyes. "Sorry," you say. The word is empty, but not ironic. You aren't mocking me, then.

I frown a bit. This is not like you. It could just be the exhaustion, but we've been at this for months. Usually, being tired just compounds your sarcasm and spite, not reduces it.

"There is no need to apologize, Raito-kun," I answer after a moment. The elevator doors ding softly and glide open. I step through, you following close at my heels, walking a bit unsteadily. "I commented because I thought perhaps there was a reason. Do you require anything? More sleep, perhaps?"

You don't answer for a moment, so everything is quiet for awhile as only the sound of our feet shuffling on the carpet reaches my ears. Your gait is slow and shambling, much like mine, actually. It's very different from your usual precise, crisp step that reminds me of biting into an apple during autumn.

"That's very generous of you, Ryuuzaki," you finally say. "But no, I'll be fine."

"Is Raito-kun becoming ill?" I ask, fumbling in my jeans pocket for our room key. I opted for old-fashioned keys, since you could easily memorize a code, and retina or fingerprint scans seemed excessive for bedrooms. There is only one key, however, and it is kept on my person at all times.

You wait patiently as I work the key into the lock and turn it. Again, it takes you awhile to answer, and I glance back at you as I push open the door to our room, the cool, unused air brushing my skin a bit. I wonder if you're perhaps thinking too hard about these questions, and whether or not I should be suspicious.

You follow me into the room, and we both reach for the light switch. My hand brushes yours, the chain between us clinking, and you pull away immediately. It is the first quick movement you have made in hours, and I make a note of it.

"No," you say, at last answering my question about your health. "No, I'm not sick. I'm sorry my work's slow, Ryuuzaki. I'll be faster tomorrow. I just need a bit of sleep."

You brush past me then, going straight for the bed. You don't even bother to stop by the bureau to grab your pyjamas. Instead, you clumsily unbutton your pants and wriggle out of them, your exhaustion evident in how maladroit your actions have become. You clamber into bed then, clothed only in your soft, maroon sweater and your boxers, something you have never done before.

I wonder briefly why this should bother me, but after a few seconds you are asleep, and I am absorbed in my laptop, so I stop thinking about it altogether.

You wake late; I expected it, and I have already called down to the task force and told them that we might be late today, if we show up at all. I spoke with your father, who didn't sound especially happy about it at first, but when I told him that it was for your health, he sounded much more accommodating towards the idea.

You slept peacefully, soundly, for nearly eight hours, so I am surprised that when you wake up, you are groggy and disoriented. The first thing your eyes really focus on is me, still typing lightly on my laptop, and then your eyes immediately clear. Secretly, I like this—the fact that I am what makes your mind focus.

"Ryuuzaki," you say, glancing around the room. Your speech doesn't have the slur it did last night, and you sit up quickly, eyes darting at the clock before returning to me. "We're really late," you finally finish, a bit lamely.

"I am afraid that perhaps I was working Raito-kun too hard," I say offhandedly. "His work has been steadily losing speed and quality for the past week or so."

Your eyes flash and for a moment I think I'll be treated to one of your delightful tirades, or maybe even a fistfight. But then the fire leaves them and your mask is back and you just shrug. "I am sorry about that," you apologize dully. "Thanks for letting me recover."

I am taken aback by your politeness. I suddenly remember that this is not the first time you've been uncharacteristically nice to me. It's been all week, really. That isn't right—the polite Yagami Raito is for teachers and parents and authority figures, and every so often it's for fellow students. But it's not for me—or, at least, it hasn't ever been in the past. You've always been surprisingly honest with me, possibly because you know I can see right through you. And now that you're acting like this, I find that I much prefer the Raito that feels anger, spite, contentment, fear, amusement. And I wonder what's changed now. But I don't bring it up; you would just deny it anyway. Instead I ask, "Is Raito-kun hungry?"

You shrug, but just then your stomach gives a vicious growl and you smile apologetically. I don't like that expression, but I keep my features neutral. "I guess so, yeah," you say. I like the casual speech on your lips—it makes you sound more human, more approachable.

I stand, cracking my stiff joints as I do. The noise usually makes you complain or lecture me, or even just cringe, but this morning . . . nothing. It's synonymous with the past week—you've been oddly compliant, and now that I've noticed, I'm itching to find out why.

I decide to test your limits—let's see how acquiescent you are when I'm actually *trying* to be annoying, instead of just my regular self, bad habits included of course.

You are getting out of bed, looking slightly discomfited as you search for your pants, which lay wrinkled and sort of sad-looking at the side of the bed. You start to pick them up, and then you nearly fall over as I start to walk towards the little kitchen we have in our apartment. I don't spare you a backwards glance as I tug you ruthlessly towards the eating area.

Finally, you catch up to me at the fridge, and I glance at you as you come to stand behind me.

Nothing. Your face is cool as ever, even though you are gingerly rubbing your wrist, which has sharp, red lines cutting into it. "Is Raito-kun all right?" I ask, getting obnoxiously close, taking your hand between mine and looking at the slight injury, which is actually bleeding a little. I feel a twinge of guilt, and I look into your eyes, just inches away from mine.

You have a funny look on your face, like you're stuck between shouting at me or attacking or . . . something else I can't identify.

But you do none of these things. Your expression becomes faintly revolted as you jerk your hand away and you bend over to look into the well-stocked fridge. "I'm fine," you say, and it looks as though you are speaking to the peaches. "I just didn't realize that you were already headed into the kitchen."

I frown. There you go, assigning the blame to yourself again, something you almost never do. Raito Yagami is a perfectly constructed façade, and it is unlike you to admit that you could be anything but the mask you wear. I wait as you extract a gallon of milk and a bowl of sliced peaches for yourself, and then I reach in and grab a few slices of cake, snagging the whipped cream as well, just for good measure.

I sit at the table, and watch as you put the tea kettle on to boil. We both like tea in the mornings—another small similarity between us that I delight in.

You don't even glance at me as I dig into my cake, so I decide to be noisier than usual and messier too. Crumbs are all down my front and certainly all over the table by the time you turn around, two cups of tea in hand.

Your eyes widen for a moment at the sight of me, and your mouth opens, and I think maybe, if I play my cards right, I'll get a good argument with you in before breakfast.

But then your mouth closes with a snap and you merely shrug a bit and sit down elegantly across from me, handing me my tea as you go.

I take it without a *thank you*, cross that you refuse to rise to my bait. Surely you must realize, Raito Yagami, that I am deliberately provoking you. Why don't you fight back?

I half-heartedly brush the crumbs off of my person and away from my mouth, and then I begin to scoop the sugar into my tea as you sip your own. Normally, this would trigger a lecture or at least a sigh from you, but this morning . . .

Silence.

It bothers me. It bothers me that it bothers me. So, naturally, I continue acting like a complete idiot. L Lawliet, genius and mature human being, that's me.

Scooping up a particularly saccharine bit of cake on my fork, I push it towards your face. You just took a bite of peaches, and now you are looking at me, eyebrows raised, as you work to swallow without choking or laughing or . . . or something. I can't quite read you this morning, and it bothers me.

And it bothers me that it bothers me and so on and so forth. My brain seems to be stuck in one gear. I smile at you, my little curved smile that we both know is fake.

"Would Raito-kun like a bite?" I ask.

"No, thank you, Ryuuzaki," you say, picking up your tea and sipping it.

I don't move my hand. "I think he would like it," I stress. "It is sugary and ice cream-filled."

"I don't like ice cream," you say, a few tiny lines beginning to appear between your eyebrows. "And I certainly don't like that much sugar in the mornings."

"Ah, but Raito-kun forgets that his peaches are quite sugary as well, especially considering the fact that they were canned." Not giving you a chance to expose my faulty logic, I continue rapidly. "And I think that Raito-kun would benefit from a sugar rush; it might help him suppress his exhaustion."

You stare at me, and for the barest of seconds, I see real anger flash across your face.

And then it is gone, and you smile a bit, that small, tired, disconnected smile you gave me last night. "I'm not tired, Ryuuzaki," you say. "It just takes me awhile to wake up fully. You know that—we've lived together for awhile now."

"Try it," I insist, all logic abandoned now. I just want to irritate you, to make you well and truly annoyed.

Your eyes are fixed on mine. You know the game I'm playing—I can see it. But, for whatever reason, you're refusing to play. "No, thank you," you repeat, your voice soft. But not angry. You're not letting yourself get angry with me. And I don't like it.

So I just sit there, a bit of cake extended stupidly, staring at you challengingly.

And you stare right back.

And it's probably thirty seconds of idiotic staring before you do something entirely unexpected. Without removing your gaze from mine, you slowly lean down and let your lips close over my fork. And you straighten, and chew, and swallow.

Staring at me all the while.

I swallow myself as I feel my blood start to heat, and I decide that I rather like feeding you, especially when your eyes are so focused on me. My eyes are suddenly drawn to the bare skin around the neck of your sweater, but only for a moment before I look back at your face, trying to read you. You're playing a new game with me, Raito, but I can't tell what it is. What are your rules? Why are you so restrained? Why did you feel the need to start playing something different, when I liked our old game just fine?

I consider pouting over this for exactly as long as it takes me to realize that you wouldn't care if I did.

"Sugary," you comment, breaking the tense silence.

"What?" I say. Eloquent, yes, that's me.

"The cake," you clarify, not taking advantage of my momentary stupidity. "It's sugary."

I look down at it. "Yes," I say. "I suppose so." Oh God, why do I sound so mentally challenged? Perhaps I should have napped last night.

You stand up and open the fridge again. Presumably, the peaches didn't fill you, and you start rummaging around again. My eyes move down your figure, studying you as I have been known to do. But perhaps they rest on your tanned thighs and rake higher for a little bit too long. "Why," you say, your voice somewhat muffled by the appliance, startling me out of my shameless staring, "why do you like to fight with me so much, Ryuuzaki?" You straighten, a container of apple juice in one hand and a croissant in the other.

I am at a loss for words, for once. Of course I knew that you knew exactly what I was doing, trying to get you riled up and angry. But I didn't expect you to call me on it so bluntly. So instead of answering, I counter. "Doesn't Raito-kun think that fighting is fun?" Damn it, I sound so inane. Why do I sound like such a child around you?

You shrug as you pour yourself a glass of apple juice. I watch the amber-colored liquid fill the glass, rather than looking at your face. The color of the juice reminds me of your eyes. I look up, inexplicably uncomfortable with the comparison. "Yeah," you admit, coming to sit down across from me again. You finish off your tea before continuing. "I mean, it is fun," you explain. "You're the only person I've ever met who I can fight with. But . . ." You interrupt yourself here, taking a deliberate bite of your croissant. "But sometimes I like peace and quiet between us. Is arguing all we can do?"

Your eyes are wary, guarded, and I feel as though we are getting to the bottom of it here. Whatever the hell "it" is supposed to be. "What does Raito-kun mean?" I ask. "We also converse and discuss opinions about Kira and the case. We are chained together, and consequently we eat together and share most things."

You shrug again, and I'm beginning to loathe the little, meaningless gesture. "I guess," you say. "But, Ryuuzaki . . ." you hesitate again, eating more of your breakfast. "I mean, we're friends, right?"

I blink, confused at the track this conversation has now taken. "I suppose," I hazard.

"Friends don't just argue and work," you point out. "They talk about other stuff and do things together."

"Raito-kun and I sleep together," I comment dryly. "I don't see how much closer we can get."

You stare down into your empty tea mug, a light blush dusting your features. Fascinating. "I suppose so," you concede. You finish off your breakfast and down the apple juice quickly. After you've finished, you stand and move as if you're going to leave, but I don't move, and so slowly you turn your head and make yourself make eye contact with me. "What?" you ask.

I take a deep breath, fully intending to tell you that it's nothing, we should get ready and go down to the task force now. But with my exhalation, I suddenly find myself saying, "Raito-kun has been acting very strangely over the past week or so, and I don't know why, and it is very unnerving and I am frustrated. I wish to know why his behavior has changed, and also I miss fighting with him and I think perhaps he is deliberately trying to irritate me by acting so very ordinary."

You are still as I speak and finally, after a few seconds of the silence that dwindles after my little speech, I look up at you.

You're only a few feet away, and you look . . . vaguely amused by my outburst. Well, that isn't good. And it certainly isn't the reaction I was looking for.

Finally, you sink into the chair next to mine, and tentatively put your hands up on the table next to mine. "I'm sorry," you say, twisting your hands together. I frown. I have decided I hate your apologies, and that the next time you give one, I will kick you without explication. "It's just . . . it's hard to explain, and I don't think you'd appreciate it if I did."

"I just told Raito-kun that I wanted an explanation," I say sullenly. I suddenly lean in closer. "Unless Raito-kun's recent behavior has something to do with Kira?" I ask, my voice maybe too excited. "Major personality changes can be indicators of emotional or psychological turmoil and when Raito-kun was in his cell—"

I suddenly stop speaking because suddenly you have closed the inches-wide gap between us and your lips are very soft on mine. Your hands are still on the tabletop, I note distantly, and then I don't notice anything because my eyes slide closed, without me really realizing what I'm doing.

I do notice, however, when the pressure of your soft lips becomes more prominent, and I notice that my brain seems to be moving in slow motion and all I can think is, distantly, *Raito is kissing me damn this feels good*. Your lips start to move gently, and I feel something wet grazing my lips, tracing them, and I open my mouth slightly, more in surprise than anything else. There aren't even hands involved, but your tongue slides into my open mouth and then all thoughts screech to a halt as your tongue strokes mine and laps at the insides of my cheeks, and I'm moving too all of a sudden, wait, when did I start that, when did I start moving my tongue too? But damn, it feels good, oh, it feels so good, and now there are teeth and *did I just make that noise?*

But I don't have time to wonder about that, because suddenly, the feeling of you is gone from my mouth, though your soft, apple taste remains. You've jerked away, scooting your chair back, standing up, and you're speaking. "Oh, shit, Ryuuzaki," I hear you say as you pull away completely. "Shit, I'm sorry!"

I vaguely remembering the promise I made to myself about kicking you when you apologized next, but instead I settle for opening my eyes.

You're staring at me, an absolutely horrified (*adorable*) expression on your face. Your lips are still wet, and the blush on your cheeks is nothing short of crimson. "I'm sorry," you repeat, obviously taking my silence for anger. "I didn't mean to— I just—You were close and I—"

I touch cold fingers to my lips, dazed for a moment, and then I stand slowly, trying to fit all my thoughts back in order, before remembering that I'm a messy person anyway, and it felt so good and so what the hell. I take a deliberate step forward so that we're chest to chest, and I place the fingers that were previously on my own lips to yours. "Is this why

Raito-kun has been so distracted lately?" I ask.

If it's even possible, your blush deepens. You nod, mutely, then try to speak around my fingers. "I didn't think you'd . . . feel the same. I mean, it's like you said, we're just coworkers, we just work on the case together. But when we were fighting a week ago, I noticed that I . . . that is . . . you were on top of . . . um," you finish decisively.

I place a hand under your face, cupping it. It's very warm and quite soft and as I lift my hand it moves with me and your eyes meet mine, albeit unwillingly. "Raito-kun does like it when we fight," I conclude approvingly.

"Well, yes," you manage. Your voice sounds a bit strangled, and I feel like my blood has been replaced with a new, fiery substance that races through my veins. I like doing this to you, Raito Yagami, this rendering you speechless and embarrassed. I decide to try it some more.

I think about that for a moment, before deciding that maybe being direct with you will get me the best results. I lean forward and kiss your cheek, once, gently, before I move down to your neck. I'm only kissing, but then I flick my tongue out, and you taste so damn good that suddenly I'm biting and sucking at the skin on your throat. Your hands come up and rest, one on my chest, the other in my hair, moving, gently caressing as you tilt your head to allow me further access to your lovely, smooth skin.

I bite down, harder, and you make a noise halfway between pain and pleasure, and that only encourages me as I flick my tongue against the bit of blood my canines have drawn. I pull away suddenly, admiring your dazed expression and half-lidded eyes for a moment before speaking.

"I am under the impression that sex can be just another way of fighting," I comment.

Your eyes are soft, but when you hear my comment, they narrow. "You think that sex should be a game?" you ask. "With a winner and a loser?"

"Not a game," I correct, because I know exactly who you would consider to be the victor in such an exchange. And I will be topping you, Raito Yagami, not the other way around.

At least . . . not at first.

"A challenge," I clarify. "And we can both win."

Your suspicious look has not eased a bit. It's cute, I'll admit, but when you start to speak, beginning to warm up to a lecture, I become irritated. Because now I know of a much better use for your mouth.

So I gently push backwards until your back is flat against the wall, and I kiss you again, this time moving so that my leg is between yours, rubbing gently, insistently. Your hands move to the hem of my shirt and you tease it upwards—though I don't know who you're teasing, Raito, me or yourself—and so I press harder, to encourage you. My shirt slides off and you run your cool hands down the length of my torso, stopping where my jeans fasten. You play with the button, making me impatient and—damn if I'm not careful I really am going to lose this.

So I decide to make you want to lose it first.

I trail my hands down your sides, fingers dancing, and then they brush your hip and you start a little. Then my fingers trace further down your leg, as my mouth continues to bite at the absolutely *delicious* skin on your throat.

My fingers curl around your leg and your fingers clench around the soft skin of my abdomen as I pull your leg up, hitching it around my waist.

And suddenly everything is so much hotter and we're pressed together, oh *god* just like that, with you rubbing against me and your hands in my hair, your quiet moans encourage me as I pull the collar away from the tight skin on your chest and start sucking and teasing the skin there with my teeth, with my tongue. Your leg stays where it is all on its own, so my hands are free to move around to the waistband of your boxers. You moan something that sounds suspiciously like *Oh, god, Ryuuzaki!*

And later, when we're just a messy sprawl in the blankets and pillows of our bed, and everything is sort of hazy and languid and delightfully warm, you are laying curled up close to me, your head resting on my shoulder, your hair tickling my bruised throat.

"Is this a more satisfactory activity for Raito-kun than fighting or talking about the Kira case?" I ask.

Your head shifts and I glance down to see that you are looking at me. "Are you kidding?" you mumble. "That's not exactly . . . something friends do together. You know that, right, Ryuuzaki?"

"I know," I say.

Your head relaxes back on me again. "Good," you mutter. "I didn't want to be friends anyway. I wanted . . . this. To be . . . this." You gesture vaguely with one hand.

"I am not averse to the idea, Raito-kun," I say.

"This . . . this isn't just a one-time thing for you?" you ask, your voice sounding distantly surprised, and I can tell that you are suppressing your emotions again. "I thought that maybe . . ."

I suddenly sit up and straddle you, and you make a small noise—rather like a stifled squeak—of surprise. "It most certainly had better not only take place once," I say, the edges of my voice rough.

Your eyes widen, and I decide that I rather like the almost frightened, almost defensive, certainly aroused look you're giving me. Your hands trail lazily down my sides, causing me to squirm a bit. You and I both found out just little while ago that I'm ticklish, and the knowledge seems to delight you. Your fingers rest low on my hipbones as you lean up and kiss me.

"You're right, Ryu," you say, your voice a purr. "It should at least be twice."

A/N: The next chapter's revisions in Asylum are giving me some trouble, so I give you this! And yes, I know that it's silly to think that chapters I've already written and posted before are being troublesome, but I never did like the ending of Asylum, so now I'm trying to rework it. We'll see how THAT goes.

In the meantime, here's a fluffy oneshot that should just fill you with all kinds of joy. If it worked, let me know! If it didn't . . . you probably have no soul and should consult your religious leader about that problem.

Please review--and thanks for reading!